Corridor Working Group Meeting – Meeting Summary

August 15, 2006
11:00 – 12:30
WSDOT Kent Maintenance Center
26620 68th Avenue South, Kent 98032

Attendees:

WSDOT
Carol Hunter
Ron Landon
Chad Brown

King County
Paul Takamine

Port of Tacoma
Sean Egan

EnviroIssues
Kristine dos Remedios

City of Kent
Tim LaPorte
Cathy Mooney

PSRC
Charlie Howard

City of Renton
Keith Woolley

Carter Burgess
Russ McCarty

City of Auburn
Dennis Dowdy
Roger Thordarson

Washington State Patrol
Chris Old

Perteet
Michael Booth
Steve Sindiong
Tresia Bass
Jeff Lundstrom

Welcome and Introductions
Carol Hunter, WSDOT

Carol Hunter, WSDOT, welcomed the group and thanked them for coming.

Carol specifically welcomed Sean Egan who was joining the group for the first time from the Port of Tacoma. She noted that the group typically meets at 1:30 pm every third Tuesday of the month, and this meeting time was unusual.

Approve June 20th Meeting Summary
Carol Hunter, WSDOT

Copies of the July 18th meeting summary were sent to the partners via email before the meeting and a hard copy was provided at the meeting. Carol asked for comments on the summary and approved the summary without additional comment.

HOT Lanes Status Report
Jeff Lundstrom, Perteet

Jeff Lundstrom provided a brief update on the HOT Lanes Pilot Project. The team is working on getting the PS&E contract out in order to begin the process of selecting a civil contractor to build the HOT lanes structures and lay down the correct striping. The RFP is now out for the software development package. There has been a good response from the tolling industry. Proposals will be

reviewed and one will be selected by September. The tolling software vendor will begin work as soon as the contract can be executed once they are selected.

The team is also finalizing the remaining details of the HOT lanes design including where to install the control cabinets for the HOT lanes variable message signs, to make sure the new physical elements of the HOT lanes stay out of wetland and wetland buffer areas.

The Washington State Patrol (WSP) has also been involved in discussions about enforcement of the HOT lanes. Automated enforcement will not be used for the HOT lanes project, so discussions about staff enforcement are crucial to the success of the project. White lights will be installed on a gantry that will flash when a valid transponder is read. This light will be visible to law enforcement officers upstream and downstream of the HOT lanes traffic to indicate that the vehicle successfully paid the toll. If the light does not flash, the officer will have to determine whether or not the car is an HOV, and therefore does not have to pay a toll. If the vehicle is not an HOV and the white light does not flash, the driver can be pulled over. The officer will be equipped with a hand held reader for the transponder to check the device. If the device or account is not active, the officer can then issue a ticket for violating the HOT lane and the HOV rules.

Discussion:

- Carol Hunter noted that the team has decided that it is aiming for a spring 2008 opening of the HOT lanes instead of a fall 2007 opening.
- The partners asked if the signage will be clear enough so that a person who is in the HOT lane knows they are in the HOT lane and if they do not have a valid transponder as a single occupancy driver, they are a violator. The team said yes, that there would be many warning signs that the driver is in the HOT lane before the toll is charged.
- The partners asked Chris Old from WSP if there have been a lot of “HERO” calls for SR 167. He said yes, that SR 167 has a particularly high number of HOV violators and “HERO” calls.
- Chris Old asked if there would be enforcement areas with wide enough shoulders to pull over violators. The team said that they are not modifying shoulder areas for the HOT lanes. Therefore, there will be some areas that are not wide enough to pull over a violator. In most cases you will need to follow the violator, have them pull out of the HOT lane in the next ingress/egress area and pull them over on the right shoulder. WSDOT realizes that this is not ideal for enforcement. Future HOT lanes will have enforcement areas or wide enough shoulders built in, as a way to improve upon the pilot system.
- The partners asked if there would be sufficient warnings to educate drivers about the double white lines. Signage to warn drivers that it is illegal to cross the double white line will be placed every 1/3 mile along the HOT lanes corridor.

Stage 4/5 HOV Environmental Assessment
Ed Barry, WSDOT

Ed Barry, WSDOT, gave a brief update on the Stage 4/5 HOV Environmental Assessment (EA) project. The project description has changed to a southbound only HOV extension from Auburn (the end of the Stage 3 extension) to at least 24th if not SR 410. The team is moving forward with environmental documentation and preliminary design. There is some concern about impacts to stormwater flow, wetlands and jurisdictional ditches. The team has RW Beck, who specializes in stormwater and water quality on the team to help address these concerns. At upcoming CWG meetings, the team will provide the partners with an update on what WSDOT knows about stormwater and wetland impacts and the team's ideas about mitigation.

The team is also looking in to going through a categorical exclusion process to eliminate or expedite the environmental documentation process.

Discussion:

- Paul Takemine, King County, asked what the construction timeline was on the Stage 4/5 HOV extension. Ed said it would be in the 2009-2010 construction schedule

Preliminary Results of Transportation Modeling
Tresia Bass and Michael Booth, Perteet

Copies of the PowerPoint presentation were provided to each of the attendees.

Tresia Bass reviewed the existing and 2030 problems and weave volumes for westbound and eastbound AM and PM peak hours for the SR 410/SR 512 interchange. Tresia also reviewed Alternatives 1 and 5 that were modeled for this interchange. With Alternative 1, SR 512 remains at capacity. Alternative 5 relieves congestion at SR 410 with an added braided slip ramp from SR 167 to SR 512 and SR 410.

Tresia also reviewed the SPUI at the S 180th Street Interchange with and without the 41st Street ramps open. The model shows that traffic is still backing up at Linda Avenue SW even with this improvement. Adjustments will have to be made to the interchange to relieve this congestion.

Michael Booth then reviewed the long term options (Options 1-4) for the Corridor wide vision. These options were first developed for the 2003/2004 analysis and were used to request funding under the last RTID package. The key elements of all four options are general purpose lanes, auxiliary lanes and HOV/HOT lanes.

Michael explained the four corridor options:

- Option 1 – (7 Lanes) Two general purpose lanes and one managed lane in each direction with a reversible managed lane and auxiliary lanes in some segments
- Option 2 – (8 Lanes) Three general purpose lanes and one managed lane in each direction with auxiliary lanes in some segments
- Option 3 – (9 Lanes and Reversible HOT lane) Two to three general purpose lanes and one managed lane in each direction and one reversible managed lane
- Option 4 – (10 Lanes) Three general purpose lanes and two managed lanes in each direction

Michael explained that there is also an Option 5 being considered, which is a 10 lane option with a northbound directional ramp that connects to northbound I-405.

Discussion:

- Chad Brown asked if looked at adding a two-lane reversible HOT lane as and element of at least one option. This may reduce the footprint required for the reversible lane in ratio with the number of lanes added.
- Tim La Port asked if Truck Only Toll (TOT) lanes were considered for these options. One of the managed lanes could be a TOT lane. Carol Hunter said that the team looked into this idea. They contacted other communities around the country who are considering TOT lanes and what the truck traffic threshold is to make a TOT lane system viable. The team was told that this threshold is about 20,000 large trucks per day on the facility. SR 167 currently carries 12,000 trucks per day of various sizes, so our facility is not close to that threshold yet, but it may be in the future. A TOT lane would likely need to be funded through a public-private initiative. SR 509 may also be a good candidate for implementing a TOT lane in the future.
- Tim asked Carol to write down the team's findings on TOT lanes in a memo, so the City of Kent can use it to answer questions that they are getting about TOT lanes from the Port and trucking companies.
- Charlie Howard shared some ideas from his recent visit to Europe tour some of their new systems for traffic and roadway management. Variable speed limit signs, use of shoulders for additional driving lanes during peak periods, automated checks for opening and closing reversible lane systems, mandatory right lanes for trucks and pull-offs that trigger incident response were among the systems. He noted how impressed he was with the active management of their systems and the investments made in maximizing the efficiency and use of existing pavement.

Next Meeting: 9/19/06
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The team will bring results from the 2030 modeling of the long term options at the next meeting. The team asked the partners to send any recent freight information to them, as they are still trying to collect the most up to date information on freight for the SR 167 corridor. The partners thought that the Port of Tacoma recently completed an origin destination study. Sean Egan may be a good source to track that study down.